

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope of Review

The Department of Education Agency Review committee of the 2004 legislative interim requested that we review certain aspects of the State's implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Specifically, the committee was interested in information concerning the nature and amounts of federal funding available to the State to fund requirements of NCLB. Additionally, the committee was interested in information concerning costs that will be incurred by the State and local school districts to implement NCLB.

While reviewing some of the numerous papers, reports and studies that have been written about NCLB, it became apparent to us that the answer to the question of what it will cost the State and local school districts of South Dakota (SD) to implement NCLB is at this point essentially unknowable.

We reviewed reports and critiques of cost studies conducted in other states. In our opinion, those cost estimates are at best educated guesses with emphasis on the word guess. For example, a contracted cost study of NCLB was conducted for the State of Ohio and the study was critiqued by ten experts on NCLB. Of the ten experts, two believed the study's cost estimates were accurate, two believed the study's cost estimates were significantly low, three believed the study's estimates were significantly high and three said the extent to which assumptions were used in the study weakened any accuracy of the study's cost estimates.

That is not to say that these cost studies were not useful or valuable to us or other users. On the contrary, while we found no estimates of costs from other states that we could reasonably extrapolate to SD in terms of dollars, we found commonality and significant value in the identification and discussion of the activities associated with NCLB implementation and the nature of related costs.

Another thing that became obvious to us is that there is no real value in comparing the costs of implementing NCLB from state to state because of various factors. Some of these factors include:

- ? The nature of the assessment and accountability system in place in each state prior to NCLB.
- ? The level of student achievement in each state prior to NCLB.
- ? Flexibility allowed the states in the development of plans for the implementation NCLB's requirements.
- ? The number and sizes of school districts in the various states and the diversity of their student populations.

In this report, we have drawn few conclusions regarding NCLB and its impact on SD. Rather our purpose is to provide the reader with information about NCLB as it relates to SD so perhaps they can better formulate their own conclusions.